

THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS
ACTIVE NATIONWIDE

PORLAND, Ore. -- Christian education leaders from throughout the Episcopal Church spent four days at a retreat house here at the start of a five week period that culminated in the celebration around the Church of "Christian Education Week."

The meeting here brought together 16 of the Regional Religious Education Coordinators Sept. 30 to Oct. 3 to discuss a variety of issues that affect the Christian education ministry. The Coordinators serve as consultants to the national Office of Christian Education and provide support for provincial and regional Christian education programs throughout the Church.

Their meeting -- conducted by Christian education staff officer the Rev. David Perry -- addressed a number of matters through workshops including networks, urban issues, use of the AWARE material and approaches to total ministry. In the urban forum, the Coordinators concluded that Christian educators have an important role in building a just and humane society. They agreed that justice and love were goals of Christian education; goals to be met through helping Christians "know, speak and act the Good News."

The Coordinators' meeting was followed in early October by a gathering of educators from the south-central region of Province VIII to discuss that Province's recent Synod with its emphasis on shared ministry. Elizabeth High, Coordinator for the region, led the discussion.

A third October meeting brought Province III educators to Alexandria, Va., to hear Canon Earl Brill of the College of Preachers lead an exploration of the media and pop culture as vehicles for Christian education. Brill demonstrated the use of television as a Christian education resource and pointed out: "The value of TV is that it is right there -- where people are already." He defined the task as "helping people get some handles on what they are being flooded with."

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"People yearn for a chance to talk about what they have seen on TV. By creating an atmosphere for this to happen, the Christian Educator can enable people to think theologically," Brill said.

"Using television for Christian Education offers people the opportunity to look at real experience through their own religious perspective. If people can learn to reflect theologically vicariously on TV programs, they can also learn to reflect theologically on their own lives," he concluded.

The Province III diocesan Christian education leaders meet twice a year for professional development, sharing and "switchboarding" resource people and materials. The group also functions as a "support" group for one another. The diocesan leaders identify issues for the agenda of the meetings. A design team, aided by Coordinators Dorothy Watt and Nathan Baxter, prepares the meeting activity.

The spate of activity ended with the churchwide celebration of Christian education week in the first week of November. The purpose of the week was to celebrate Christian education "as a vital part of the total mission and ministry of the Church," said the Rev. Fred Howard, staff officer for Christian education. The event was encouraged by the Executive Council of the Episcopal Church and supported by program materials provided by Perry's and Howard's office.

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